

Message Text

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43

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-11 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SAM-01 SAB-01 ACDA-05 ACDE-00

TRSE-00 AID-05 OMB-01 DHA-02 ORM-02 SSM-03 A-01 OPR-02

SY-05 OC-05 CCO-00 EB-07 COME-00 MC-02 /116 W

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O R 151445Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO AMSECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8160

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN NY

USCINCEUR VAHINGER GER

CINCUSNAVERU LONDON UK

COMMSIXTHFLT

CTF SIX ZERO

CTF SIX ONE

CTF SIX TWO

CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO

FOSIF ROTA SPAIN

FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA

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DIA WASHDC

CIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 0501

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, LE

SUBJ: FIGHTING AND POLITICS IN HARE-AND-TORTOISE RACE
OVER COUNTRY'S FATE

REF: BEIRUT 0442 (1427Z)

1. SUMMARY: PHALANGISTS HAVE TAKEN DBAYE REFUGEE CAMP. IN RETALIATION, PALESTINIANS AND ALLIES ARE STEPPING UP SIEGE OF DAMOUR. TEL ZAATAR BLOCKADE CONTINUES, AND FIGHTING HAS BEEN HEAVY IN CENTRAL BEIRUT AND AROUND HOTELS. ZAHLE, NORTH LEBANON, AND BEKAA VALLEY HAVE WITNESSED SHARP CLASHES. FIGHTING IS TAKING HIGH ECONOMIC TOLL IN CAPITAL. CABINET HAS APPROVED BILL TO EXTEND PARLIAMENT'S TERM ONE YEAR, AND FRANGIE CONTINUES PREPARATIONS FOR UPCOMING SUMMIT, ON WHICH MANY HOPES ARE PINNED. SUNDAY JAN 18 NOW MENTIONED AS MOST PROBABLE SUMMIT DATE. END SUMMARY.

2. IN DBAYE, PHALANGISTS ARE CLAIMING A "MAJOR" VICTORY AFTER SUCCESSFULLY DRIVING 70 ODD CAMP DEFENDERS INTO MOUNTAINS, WHERE THEY HAVE FOUND REFUGE WITH THEIR PPS ALLIES IN NEARBY ZOUK MOUSBEH. PALESTINIANS HAVE CON-FCGMED TAKEOVER, BUT ARE DOWNPLAYING ITS IMPORTANCE, SAYING THAT CAMP WAS NOT EXPECTED TO HOLD OUT FOR LONG, BEING SMALL AND POORLY SITUATED. WHATEVER SIGNIFICANCE, THIS SUCCESS WILL FREE SOME PHALANGIST FORCES FOR ACTION IN OTHER POINTS.

3. IN RETALIATION FOR DBAYE, PALESTINIANS AND THEIR ALLIES HAVE INTENSIFIED THEIR SIEGE OF DAMOUR AND JIYE SOUTH OF BEIRUT. IT WAS HEAVILY BOMBARDED LAST NIGHT AND THIS MORNING, BUT GIVES NO SIGN OF GIVING UP GHOST YET.

4. SIEGE OF TEL ZAATAR CONTINUES. PHALANGISTS APPEAR TO HAVE DRIVEN INHABITANTS OF JISR EL PACHA OUT OF CAMP BY
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THEIR BOMBARDMENTS, IF GROWING NUMBER OF REPORTS CAN BE BELIEVED. SAME SOURCES STATE THAT PHALANGISTS HAVE BYPASSED CAMP BECAUSE IT HAS BEEN HEAVILY MINED. ADJACENT SUBURBS NIGHT JAN 14-15 JOINED IN A BOMBARDMENT OF TEL ZAATAR, AS A RESULT MOST OF AREA WITH EXCEPTION OF FURN EL CHEBBJKT WENT THROUGH HARD NIGHT.

5. IN BEIRUT, MOST OF ACTION CENTERED AROUND THE SECTORS

STRETCHING FROM HOTELS TO COMMERCIAL SECTOR. ARMOURABITOUN

OFFENSIVE MAY HAVE BEEN PARTIALLY SUCCESSFUL IN PENETRATING BAB IDRIS AND BURJ. THERE WERE HEAVY EXCHANGES AFTERNOON AND EVENING JAN 14, WITH THINGS FINALLY DYING DOWN AFTER MIDNIGHT. MOST LIKELY OBJECTIVE IS DESTRUCTION OF PHALANGIST FINGER WHICH POINTS WEST ALONG COAST FROM PORT TO HOLIDAY INN. IF THIS PLAN FAILS, IT WILL NOT BE FOR LACK OF SUPPLIES, AS MOURABITOUN, IN QUINTESSENTIAL BEIRUT FASHION, HAVE NEARLY FREE PLAY OF WESTERN SEACOAST CORNICHE FROM MAZRAA TO U.S. EMBASSY TO PROVISION THEIR AIR MREISSE SECTOR OF ATTACK ON HOLIDAY INN. IT IS NOT UNUSUAL SIGHT TO SEE LANDROVERS ON CORNICHE FILLED WITH FIGHTERS MIXED IN TRAFFIC JAMS OF RAOUCHE "SOUK".

6. ELSEWHERE, ZAHLE WAS BLESSED WITH AN UNEXPECTEDLY QUIET DAY JAN 14, ONLY TO BE SUBJECTED TO A RAIN OF PROJECTILES FOLLOWING NIGHT. BUT WITH ARMY ASSISTANCE, ZAHILOTES ARE REPORTEDLY HOLDING THEIR OWN. REGION OF ALEY, FROM ONE END TO OTHER IS EXPERIENCING CONSTANT SHELLING AND MACHINE GUN FIRE. FOR SOME UNKNOWN REASON, PALESTINIANS EVEN ATTACKED HOME OF CAIMACAM WHO HAS BEEN ACTING AS MEDIATOR.

7. IN NORTH, ZGHORTIOTES ARE STILL AT WAR WITH PRACTICALLY EVERYONE. THEY'VE HAD THEIR HANDS FULL BATTLING FROM TRIPOLI SOUTH TO KOURA, AND ALMOST LOST MAJDALAYA TO A STRONG "SNEAK ATTACK" FROM TRIPOLI. IN THE AKKAR, INCIDENTS ARE MULTIPLYING, LED BY AN ATTACK ON A SMALL ARMY CONVOY WHICH RESULTED IN SOME VEHICLES BEING DAMAGED AND SEVERAL CASUALTIES. EVEN TINY MARONITE VILLAGE OF AIN AL AHMAR NEAR BAALBEK WAS NOT IMMUNE TO CONTAGION, COMING UNDER ATTACK FROM SHIITE NEIGHBORS.

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8. PORT AREA FIGHTING IN BEIRUT IS TAKING HIGH ECONOMIC TOLL. FIRES DESTROYED A TOTAL OF FOUR WAREHOUSES BEFORE BEING BROUGHT UNDER CONTROL JAN 14; FLOUR MILLS LOCATED NEARBY HAVE NOT FUNCTIONED IN TWO OR THREE WEEKS; AND NO POL DELIVERIES HAVE BEEN ABLE TO BE MADE FROM DORA.

9. NOW THAT FIGHTING HAS PARALYZED THE DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM FOR NINE DAYS. FOOD SHORTAGES IN SOME BEIRUT AREAS ARE BECOMING ACUTE. ONE SOURCE ESTIMATES FOOD SHORTAGE MAY BECOME GENERALLY SEVERE THROUGHOUT CITY IN ANOTHER WEEK OR TEN DAYS IF FIGHTING CONTINUES TO PREVENT RESUPPLY AND FUNCTIONING OF FLOUR MILLS. RADIO REPORTS THAT LEBANESE ARE BARTERING GRAIN (TO BE DELIVERED LATER) FOR FLOUR WHICH PLANES ARE FLYING IN FROM DAMASCUS.

10. TO ALLOW POL DISTRIBUTION, MARKETERS PLAN TO ASK
HIGHER COORDINATION COMMITTEE TO ASSURE SECURITY OF
TANKER DELIVERY TRUCKS AND DORA TANK FARMS. TANKER SHIP
BRINGING GAS-OIL FROM IPC REFINERY IN TRIPOLI HAS STEAMED
OFFSHORE.

11. AIRPORT CONTINUES TO OPERATE WITHOUT INCIDENT. HOWEVER,
BRITISH AIRWAYS HAS SUSPENDED FLIGHTS AND LUFTHANSA AND
SAS WHO WERE SCHEDULED TO RESUME FLIGHTS ARE DELAYING.
REGIONAL PANAM REP IS MOVING HIS PRINCIPAL OFFICE FROM
BEIRUT TO CAIRO.

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INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-11 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

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O R 151445Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO AMSECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8161

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

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USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

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AMCONSUL STUTTGART

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USMISSION USUN NY
USCINCEUR VAHINGER GER
CINCUSNAVERU LONDON UK
COMMSIXTHFLT
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BEIRUT 0501

12. CABINET MEETING JAN 14 RESULTED IN APPROVAL OF PLAN TO EXTEND PARLIAMENT'S MANDATE FOR ONE YEAR, I.E. UNTIL MAY 3, 1977 (SEE BEIRUT 0123 AND 0178). GOVT WILL BACK A BILL IN PARLIAMENT TO ACCOMPLISH THIS GOAL. BILL IS BEING PRESENTED UNDER EMERGENCY PROCEDURES. AT END OF CABINET SESSION, KARAME TOLD PRESS HE WWAS PURSUING CONTACTS TO TRY REACHING A CEASFIRE, AND HE EXPRESSED OPTIMISM ABOUT THE UPCOMING FRANGIE-ASAD MEETING. KARAME ALSO REFERRED TO ANXIETY BEING EXPRESSED IN SEVERAL ARAB CAPITALS ABOUT LEBANON CALLING IT "JUSTIFIED" AND SAID SYRIAN MEDIATION NOW UNDERWAY IS PRECISELY THE KIND OF HELPFUL INITIATIVE ARAB WORLD SHOULD TAKE. SYRIA'S POSITION AS NEIGHBOR OF LEBANON GIVES IT SPECIAL INTEREST IN SOLVING LEBANESE STRIFE, HE DECLARED. KAMRAME ALSO CALLED FOR RESOLUTION OF LEBANESE-PALESTINIAN RELATIONSHIP ON BASIS OF PLO MEMORANDUM OF LAST OCTOBER WHICH STILL UNDER DISCUSSION (SEE 75 BEIRUT 12742 AND 12820).

13. MUCH HOPE BEING PINNED ON UPCOMING FRANGIE-ASAD CONFERENCE, AND WE CONTINUE TO HEAR OPINION THAT POLITICAL BREAKTHROUGH IS CONCEIVABLE FROM IT. WHETHER THIS IS POSSIBLE IN FACE OF RAPIDLY SPREADING INSECURITY REMAINS TO BE SEEN; BUT LEBANESE CAPACITY TO VEER AT LAST MINUTE FROM BRINK MAY YET SHOW THROUGH, DESPITE AGONIZINGLY SLOW MOTION ON POLITICAL FRONT. FRANGIE IS CONTINUING CONSULTATIONS WITH CHRISTIAN LAY AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS PRIOR TO SUMMIT JOURNEY. HE MEETS GREEK CATHOLIC AND GREEK ORTHODOX REPS TODAY. ACCORING TO PRESS, DATE OF SUMMIT WILL BE FIXED TODAY IN TELEPHONE CALL TO DAMASCUS. SUNDAY, JAN 18 IS NOW SEEN AS MORE LIKELY THAN SATURDAY, JAN 17.

14. NEAR-CERTAIN PROSPECT THAT PARILIAMENT'S MANDATE WILL

BE PROLONGED HAS STIMULATED DEBATE ON UPCOMING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. IF HELD AS SCHEDULED THIS SUMMER, ELECTION WILL COME AFTER MAY 3 PROLONGATION DATE, WHICH SOME LEBANESE CONSIDER "LAME DUCK" PERIOD OF REDUCED POLITICAL VALIDITY FOR PARLIMMENT. THERE IS FEAR THAT EXTREME
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LEFTISTS WOULD SEIZE UPON THIS TO BELITTLE PRESIDENT SO ELECTED. (THIS FEAR EXISTS EVEN THOUGH AS YET THERE HAS BEEN NO NOTICEABLE REACTION FROM LEFT TO PARLIAMENTARY PROLONGATION DIEA.) SINCE FRANGIE UNLIKELY TO OBLIGE BY RESIGNING EARLY, CURRENT FAVORITE SCHEME IS TO ELECT NEW PRESIDENT IN MARCH OR APRIL (A MOVE REQUIREING A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT) AND HAVE HIM SIT AS "ADVISER" TO FRANGIE WHILE LATTER'S NORMAL TERM RUNS OUT. THIS PLAN IS NOT CURRETNLY ON FRONT BURNER OF DISUCSSION AND PROBABLY WOULD FACE MUCH POLITICAL STATIC IF PURSUED, BUT IT INDICATES DEGREE OF FERMENT OVER PARLIAMENTARY AND PRESIDENTIAL ISSUES.

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